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### **Sen. Van Woerkom's effort to boost forestry industry approved**

**LANSING** — Bipartisan legislation that would help the state's timber industry won passage in the Michigan Senate on Tuesday.

Sen. Gerald Van Woerkom, R-Norton Shores, led the Senate effort to approve the bills that would promote better management of private and state forests. The legislation Van Woerkom sponsored also would create tax exemptions to private landowners, who own a majority of the state's forestland.

"The forest industry in our state has suffered in past years," said Van Woerkom, who chairs the Senate Agriculture, Forestry and Tourism Committee. "We need to stimulate the industry and protect Michigan jobs. My effort encourages private landowners to properly manage their land so timber supplies increase and this natural resource is preserved for future generations."

Michigan's timber prices have risen to be among the highest in the nation because of supply shortages and increased demand. The high prices threaten the industry in Michigan and the many jobs it provides.

The forestry industry employs about 200,000 people and contributes \$12 billion in economic activity. Michigan's timberland acreage is the nation's fifth largest with 19 million acres.

The bills in the package are SBs 913, 914, 917 and 919, and House Bills 5453, 5454, 5455 and 5456. The bills now go to the House of Representatives for consideration.

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